

ZYGOTE

Zygote gets charged up about bendy batteries and anti-piracy systems and turned off by censorship from the domain name police. That's before he's even looked at open-source software

ASSAULT AND BATTERY

When the digital camera revolution swept all before it, manufacturers of traditional film had fewer than five years to adapt or die. Zygot is now betting on the same thing happening to manufacturers of traditional batteries for portable electronic devices.

Toxic, inefficient and expensive, there are more dead batteries littering the planet than dog turds, which at least are biodegradable. But unlike the dog turd industry, everything about the manufacture and application of batteries is about to change. There are three constants required for a battery: an anode, a cathode and some stuff in between to hold an electrical charge. Massive development programs are under way to come up with the cheapest, most flexible combination of these elements. So far, printable batteries the size and thickness of a postage stamp seem to be in the lead, generating 1.5 volts at a cost of less than 50p.

In Japan, NEC has come up with a bendy battery made of 'organic polymer', which is thinner than a human hair, rechargeable in under 30 seconds and dirt cheap. Get ready for musical crisp packets, animated clothing and toilet paper that tells you to wash your hands. And what about battery chickens?

CHILD'S PLAY

Years of development have gone into anti-piracy systems for the

new generation of high-definition digital content. There are two rival formats, Blu-ray and HD DVD, and they both use what is known as the Advanced Access Content System for copy protection. This is a multi-billion dollar investment, because piracy of DVDs is the biggest threat facing the movie, music and computer games moguls. Teams of cryptographers, programmers and technicians were drafted in to ensure that illegal copying of the new formats would be impossible, as eager consumers embraced a new era of ultra-realistic sound and vision. And it was all a complete waste of time and money.

It took one guy eight days to crack the system wide open, using nothing more sophisticated than an Xbox-360 player and a copy of the *King Kong* movie bundled with it. Zygot is not at all surprised by this, other than the fact that it took the lone hacker so long. In the good old days, it took an enthusiastic adolescent just half an hour to bust open any copy-protection system on the planet, including time out for a pint and a pizza.

Anyway, the genie is out of the bottle and the DVD industry is back in the doo-doo. If our government thinks all that confidential data they keep banging on about can be kept secure, they have another think coming. Yet again, the world's top IT security experts have been brought down by an untrained amateur, and they always will be.

XXXPERT WITNESS

ICANN is the privately owned toady of the US government that controls internet domain registrations. Regular readers will know Zygot hates the way ICANN is increasingly manipulated to exploit domain name registrations in the interests of profit and against the interests of the public.

On 12th February this year, ICANN held a board meeting to discuss creating a new Top Level Domain to identify "sexually oriented adult material intended for consulting adults or for other community members". In other words, porn ID. The new suffix to appear after the dot on a so-called adult website is xxx, and every registration will cost around \$60 (about £30) per year. ICANN gave the global online community 21 days to pass comment, but it took Zygot 21 minutes to contribute.

Zygot believes the licensing of xxx domains has nothing to do with protecting the sensibilities of the innocent, and everything to do with ripping off legitimate website operators for \$60 a throw. Pornographers already have websites operating on hordes of domain suffixes that can be bought, borrowed, stolen and impersonated. The last thing porn merchants want is to shell out money on an identifiable xxx domain that people can avoid. So who will ICANN squeeze the millions of xxx charges from?

From the rest of us, of course. Legitimate brands, businesses and individuals will now need to protect their own reputations, and stop domain speculators from hijacking their names for ransom, using the new 'adult' suffix.

Perhaps direct action is the way to combat this global swindle. The names of the ICANN governing board are all available at www.icann.org, and Zygot hopes that if they have approved this mercenary rip-off by the time you read these words, they will already know first hand what it means to be an exposed member.

OPEN SECRET

Zygot has often questioned why governments, businesses and private individuals waste their money on ludicrously high-priced software and operating systems when there are perfectly good alternatives to be had for free. A new European Commission report asks the same question, and gives a fascinating insight into the present state and future prospects for open-source software (OSS), the stuff that can be freely shared, improved and redistributed.

The report finds 65 per cent of OSS is written by individuals, 20 per cent by research institutions and 15 per cent by contributing businesses. No real surprises there, but what is surprising is that over 560,000 European jobs have been created by OSS, generating over £175 billion in annual revenues. The prediction is that OSS will account for a third of all IT services in Europe by 2010, which means instant increases in profits for everyone who liberates themselves from the stranglehold of the commercial software barons.

Zygot thinks the report is naive in one respect only; where it believes such profits will be ploughed into OSS development. It will, of course, be trousered. ☹

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The U-Tube was invented by Sir Thomas Crapper in 1882, and soon became a universal input-output device



Dr Patrick Steptoe, a gynaecologist at Oldham General Hospital, took a beta-test YouTube version to market on 25th July 1978



It was renamed YouTube in 2005 and sold for \$1.6 billion in 2006, but it's still full of crap and popular with tossers.